

CITY OF EDMONTON

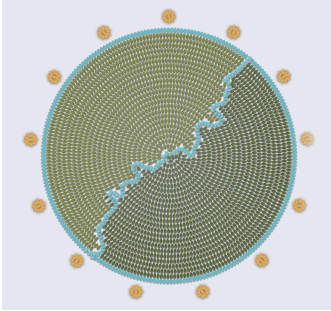
**INDIGENOUS FRAMEWORK
2023 Annual Report**

WAHIGICICOBİ
WÂKÔHTOWIN
ILAGIINGNIQ
KINSHIP

edmonton.ca/IndigenousFramework

Edmonton

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The Indigenous Framework logo was designed by Tashina Makokis.

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The City of Edmonton acknowledges the traditional land on which we reside is in Treaty 6 territory. We thank the diverse Indigenous Peoples whose ancestors' footsteps have marked this territory for centuries, such as nêhiyaw (Cree), Dene, Anishinaabe (Saulteaux), Nakota Isga (Nakota Sioux) and Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) peoples. We also acknowledge this land as the Métis homeland and the home of one of the largest communities of Inuit south of the 60th parallel. It is a welcoming place for all peoples who come from around the world to share Edmonton as a home. Together we call upon all of our collective, honoured traditions and spirits to work in building a great city for today and future generations.



City as an Advocate by Dawn Marie Marchand is on display in Edmonton City Hall.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF KINSHIP

The City of Edmonton and Indigenous community members have made significant efforts to build strong relationships with one another over the past 20 years. Together, we built the Indigenous Framework on that foundation.

We are grateful for Indigenous community members and partners — including Elders, Knowledge Holders and youth — who continue to share their time, wisdom, leadership and lived experience throughout this process.

Early in the development of this initiative, Indigenous Elders led a ceremony to begin this work in a good way, and identified a name to guide our efforts: Wahigicobi (wah-hee-gee-chee-cho-bee), an Îethka Nakoda word meaning “kinship relationships.” Elders have also shared with us related terms such as the nêhiyaw (Cree) concept of WÂHKÔHTOWIN (Wah-KOH-toh-win), as well as Ilagiingniq (ee-la-geeng-nuk) in Inuktitut.

This understanding of kinship has deep roots that includes our interconnected relationships with Mother Earth and all beings, as well as our shared responsibilities to one another, including honour and respect. We recognize all of our natural surroundings, including plants and animals that touch or rely upon the North Saskatchewan River, as well as the land, wind, snow, air and cycles of the moon and sun.

As we strengthen our relationships with Indigenous Peoples, we continue to learn about the concept of kinship shared by Elders and Knowledge Holders.



A round dance in Kinsmen Park honours the 2023 National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

GUIDANCE OF ELDERS AND KNOWLEDGE HOLDERS



The Indigenous Framework Circle of Elders and Knowledge Holders guides the City of Edmonton's reconciliation journey.

While co-creating the Indigenous Framework with Indigenous community members, the City of Edmonton convened a diverse circle of Elders and Knowledge Holders to guide our reconciliation journey.

This circle includes members of First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities who offer wisdom and lived experiences that help us connect with Indigenous community members and understand their priorities. By leading us through ceremonies, prayers and intergenerational teachings, Elders and Knowledge Holders also anchor us to Indigenous ways of knowing and being that model good kinship relationships.

Our journey is like a winding river that carries close-knit relatives and reveals new ones around each bend. We are grateful for the valuable counsel and contributions of Elders and Knowledge Holders who have joined us on this journey. We commit to strengthening the relationships created along the way and look forward to more on the horizon.



mamohkamatowin by Jerry Whitehead appears in ᐃᓄᓄ (ÎNÎW) River Lot 11[∞].

MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM

CORPORATE SPONSORS



Salima Ebrahim
Chief of Staff
Office of the City Manager

Edmonton is growing, and with it, so do our connections to one another, the history of this place and the land.

When the City of Edmonton embraced the Indigenous Framework in early 2021, we envisioned a community grounded in kinship — the principle guiding our efforts to build strong and supportive relationships with Indigenous Peoples. In the months that followed, the opening of Tawatinâ Bridge (named after the Cree word for valley) reunited neighbours under a gallery of Indigenous art; a procurement policy was revised to tear down barriers and create equitable opportunities for Indigenous businesses; and the launch of a collaborative art project turned an Edmonton bus into a roving canvas for the voice and vision of Indigenous youth.

And that was just the beginning.

In January 2023, the Executive Leadership Team met at Fort Edmonton Park's Indigenous Peoples Experience to learn from the Elders and Knowledge Holders guiding our reconciliation journey. The exchange taught us about Indigenous ways of knowing and being that inform the framework, as well as our role in championing the passionate employees bringing this initiative to life.

Over the past year, we've proudly advocated the work of teams realizing our Indigenous Framework commitments in each municipal department — from enabling the ability to smudge at facilities (including Edmonton City Hall and recreation centres), to supporting the creation and operation of kihcihkaw askî (Sacred Land) for hosting Indigenous ceremonies and intergenerational learning in the city, to encouraging firefighting as a career for diverse Indigenous Peoples with the launch of Miyowatisiwin Camp Inspire.

Relationships are at the heart of these projects, and with the Indigenous Framework as our guide, we're advancing our commitments to truth and reconciliation.



Jennifer Flaman
Deputy City Manager
Community Services

Within a year of implementing the framework, we developed plans responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action and the calls for justice outlined in the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. By March 2023, the City of Edmonton declared September 30, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, an annual civic holiday for staff to reflect on the history and legacy of residential schools.

This year, we're including annual updates from these related initiatives to provide a more comprehensive look at how the Indigenous Framework is inspiring change throughout the organization and across the city. We invite you to learn more about our efforts to become better listeners, connectors, partners and advocates in this journey.

Salima Ebrahim

Chief of Staff, Office of the City Manager
Corporate Lead for Anti-racism and Reconciliation

Jennifer Flaman

Deputy City Manager, Community Services



The kihcihkaw askî (Sacred Land) site opened in September 2023.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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(Amiskwacyiwâskahikan) by
 MJ Belcourt Moses is on
 display in Edmonton City Hall.

Three years after the City of Edmonton embraced the [Indigenous Framework](#), both the organization and Edmontonians have seen dynamic changes to the city, as well as the hearts and minds of staff and community members.

As our guide to building strong and supportive relationships with Indigenous Peoples, the framework helps employees understand their [roles](#) in this process as listeners, connectors, partners and advocates. Through their dedication, our reconciliation journey in 2023 saw several milestones including:

- [Formal recognition of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation](#)
- [Access to ceremony in many municipal facilities](#)
- [Vibrant Indigenous art installations](#)
- [A centralized learning resource for staff](#)
- [Support for cultural resurgence](#)
- [The launch of Miyowatisiwin Camp Inspire](#)
- [Engagement sessions with community partners](#)

Each of these developments align with one of our [seven commitments](#) to honour and enact the framework through municipal policies, programs and services.

The Indigenous Framework is a living initiative designed to adapt to changing community priorities as these relationships grow and mature. Over the past year, a network of [Indigenous Framework teams](#) supported by more than 100 employees were working to identify and implement more than 70 projects to advance the seven commitments, such as:

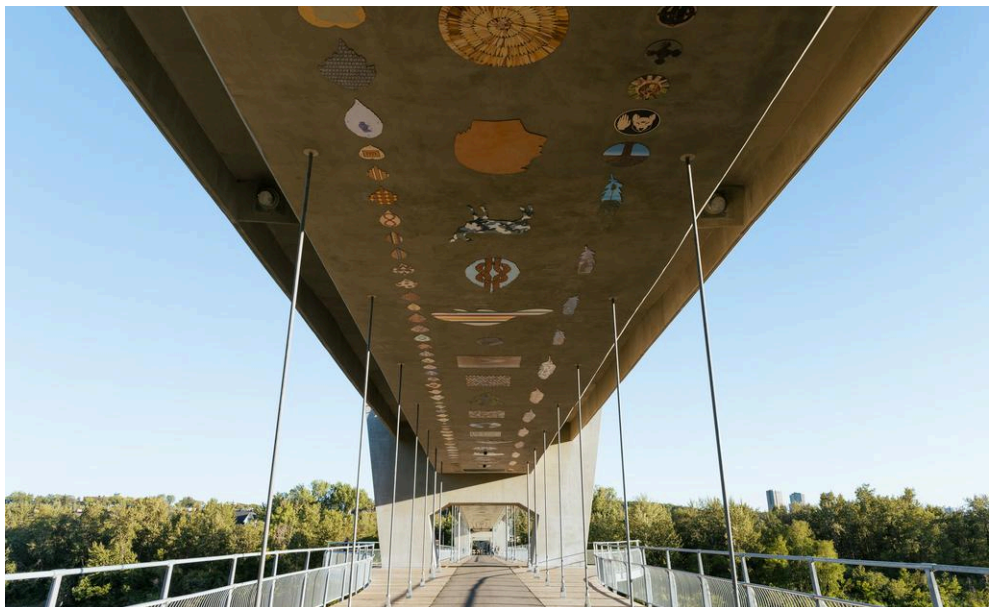
- [A treaty discussion group](#)
- [A winter count to chart Indigenous Framework projects](#)
- [Efforts to acknowledge Indigenous interests and ceremony in Rossdale](#)
- [Support for the Dene Nation and evacuees during wildfire season](#)
- [A new process for working with Elders and sharing traditional teachings](#)
- [Collaboration to conserve plants important to Indigenous cultures](#)

As the foundation for our reconciliation journey, the framework has also supported the development and implementation of [plans](#) responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) calls to action, and the calls for justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

This report includes updates on the first year of our [TRC Municipal Response Plan](#), which has grown to include more than 90 commitments that respond to, or were inspired by, 39 calls to action. Projects flowing from these commitments correspond to four thematic pillars that guide this initiative:

- [Awareness](#)
- [Addressing](#)
- [Resurgence](#)
- [Advocacy](#)

These four pillars, developed in conversation with community members, also guide our [Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives \(MMIR\) Action Plan](#), which currently includes 26 commitments connected to 50 calls for justice. As the City of Edmonton continues to implement the framework and these plans in 2024, information about [upcoming projects](#) on our reconciliation journey have also been included.



An Indigenous art installation runs the length of Tawatinâ Bridge in central Edmonton.

INDIGENOUS FRAMEWORK

Vision

The [Indigenous Framework](#) was approved by Edmonton City Council in 2021 as our guide to building strong and supportive relationships with Indigenous Peoples. Through the framework, City of Edmonton employees are supported and encouraged to demonstrate leadership in building these relationships as we honour and strive to understand Indigenous experiences, histories and cultures.

Guiding Principles

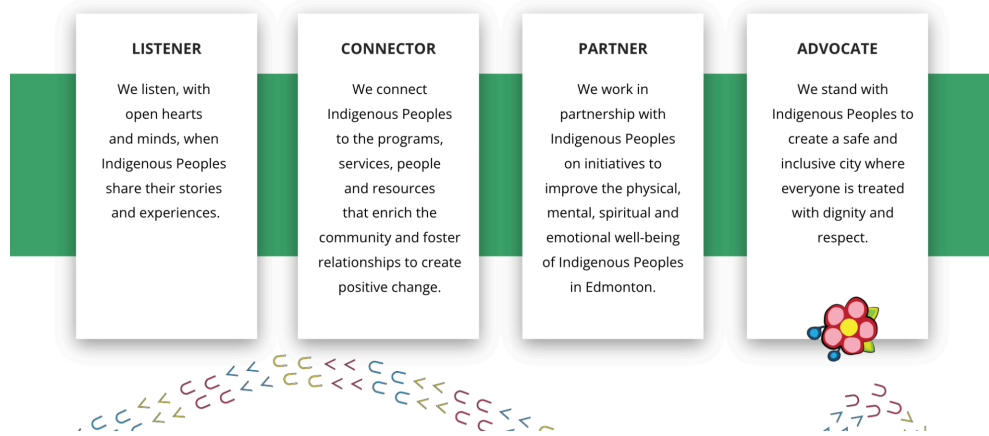
The Indigenous Framework builds upon the City of Edmonton's historical work on the [Urban Aboriginal Accord](#), which is based on four guiding principles identified by community members:



Heartbeat of a Nation by Brad Crowfoot is on display in Edmonton City Hall.

- Relationships** Strengthen connections by listening carefully to one another, honouring each other's values and demonstrating respect for protocols as well as processes.
- Agreements** Create agreements that acknowledge the past, enrich community life, provide mutually beneficial solutions and focus on the interests of future generations.
- Celebrations** Recognize, celebrate and share the stories of our growing relationships, including memorable milestones and shared achievements.
- Renewal** Renew and strengthen these relationships by honouring the spirit and intent of the framework, a living document to be reviewed periodically to maintain accountability, transparency, inclusivity and responsiveness.

Roles and Commitments



Four roles serve as “guiding lights” to help employees embody the Indigenous Framework through everyday work.

- Listener** We listen with open hearts and minds when Indigenous Peoples share their stories and experiences.
- Connector** We connect Indigenous Peoples to the programs, services, people and resources that enrich the community and foster relationships to create positive change.
- Advocate** We stand with Indigenous Peoples to create a safe and inclusive city where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.
- Partner** We work in partnership with Indigenous Peoples on initiatives to improve the physical, mental, spiritual and emotional well-being of Indigenous Peoples in Edmonton.



Selection from *Amiskwaciw Waskayhkan Ihâwin* by Destiny Swiderski



Inuk Elder Edna Elias lights a qulliq, a traditional oil lamp, in Edmonton City Hall for Indigenous Veterans Day in November 2023.

These roles function alongside seven commitments that articulate the City of Edmonton's intention to honour and enact the framework through policies, programs and services:

1. Support the journey of reconciliation by applying the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action, the calls for justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a foundation for the Indigenous Framework.
2. In partnership with organizations, businesses, academic institutions, other orders of government, and individual citizens, eliminate the systemic racism and discrimination that Indigenous Peoples face in Edmonton.
3. Identify and implement ways to make City of Edmonton spaces and buildings welcoming and safe for Indigenous Peoples and ensure they can see themselves reflected in these spaces and places.
4. Help City of Edmonton staff honour the four framework roles to build relationships with Indigenous Peoples, and increase staff knowledge of Indigenous cultures, traditions and worldviews through education and learning opportunities.
5. Host and participate in events where the City of Edmonton — including Edmonton City Council, senior leadership and all levels of the administration — can build relationships with Indigenous Peoples and celebrate our journey together.
6. Identify and remove the systemic barriers that exist for Indigenous Peoples in gaining employment with the City of Edmonton, and create career development opportunities for Indigenous employees.
7. Ensure Indigenous Peoples and City of Edmonton staff are informed and engaged, when appropriate, on actions the City of Edmonton takes in relation to the Indigenous Framework.

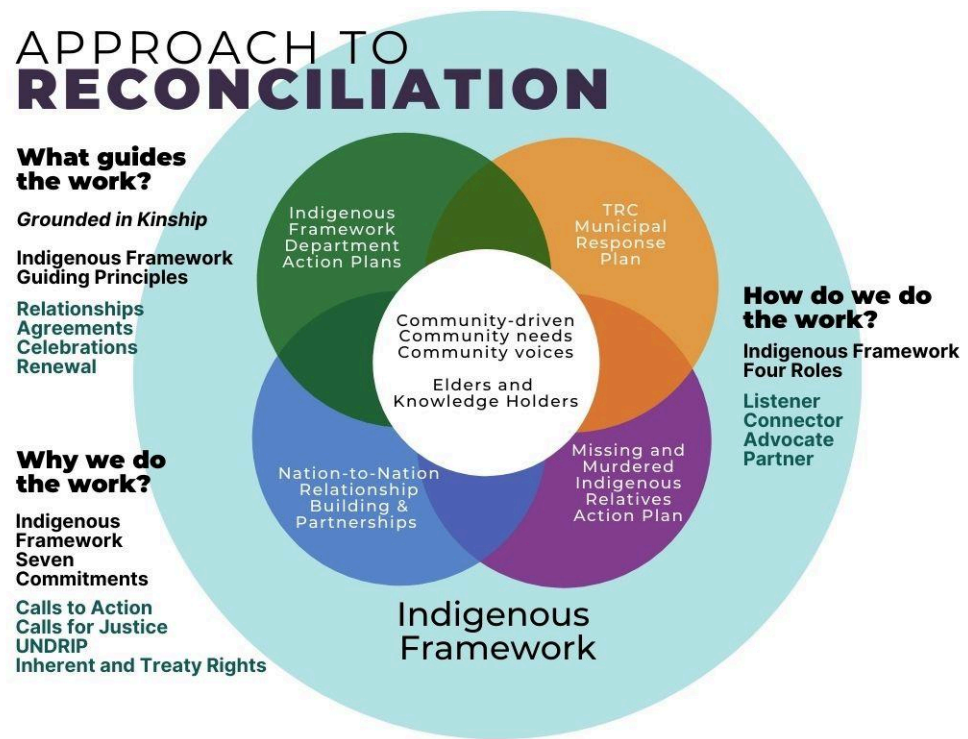


A miniature Red River cart and Métis sash rest on a table for Métis Week at Edmonton City Hall in November 2023.

Approach to Reconciliation

Co-created with Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Holders, youth and partner organizations, the Indigenous Framework is driven by the values of Indigenous community members and designed to adapt to changing priorities. The voices, experiences and contributions of Indigenous Peoples are integral to this initiative.

This foundational work enables a network of Indigenous Framework action teams that realize the four roles and seven commitments to create change throughout the organization and the greater community. It also laid the groundwork for the next steps in our journey, the creation of our [Truth and Reconciliation Commission \(TRC\) Municipal Response Plan](#) and [Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives \(MMIR\) Action Plan](#).



These integrated efforts support a comprehensive approach to reconciliation that is grounded in the spirit of kinship. The Indigenous Framework will continue to develop as these relationships mature and we gain a deeper understanding of Indigenous Peoples’ truths, experiences, identities and distinct cultures.

This work is not a “checkbox” exercise. Rather, it is part of an ongoing effort to advance the Truth and Reconciliation Commission [calls to action](#), the [calls for justice](#) outlined in the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In this multi-generational work, the process is just as important as the outcome.

Milestones

Through community engagement, activities, celebrations and commemorations, the City of Edmonton is developing stronger relationships with Indigenous Peoples and a deeper appreciation for diverse Indigenous cultures, traditions and legacies. Guided by the four roles, our journey in 2023 included many memorable milestones.

Recognizing the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation



Commitment No. 1:
Support the journey of reconciliation by applying the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action, the calls for justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a foundation for the Indigenous Framework.

In 2021, the City of Edmonton began providing staff leave with pay to observe the [National Day for Truth and Reconciliation](#) on September 30, a federal statutory holiday created the same year to honour residential school survivors and the children who were never returned, along with affected families and communities.

The creation of a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation is a direct response to Call to Action No. 80 in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s final report. At the recommendation of City of Edmonton administration in March 2023, Edmonton City Council unanimously voted to declare this day an annual civic holiday that offers staff the opportunity to reflect on the history and legacy of residential schools.

In the months that followed, preparations for Sept. 30, 2023, included the creation and circulation of a staff resource guide to facilitate learning, discussions and reflection for individuals or teams. This guide shares some of the history and legacy of residential schools along with survivor stories, cultural teachings, supports, opportunities for reflection and many more resources to support meaningful participation in the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

For the public, an education and awareness campaign directed Edmontonians to our National Day for Truth and Reconciliation webpage, which hosted a calendar of community events, activities, observances and learning opportunities along with educational resources, access to support services and answers to frequently asked questions.

We also supported community-based initiatives including the third annual [Orange Shirt Day Run and Walk](#) event in Kinsmen Park to honour the lives lost to residential schools and demonstrate solidarity with survivors. The City of Edmonton partnered with organizers to host the event, which saw more than 600 people participate and over \$13,000 raised to support the [Orange Shirt Society](#), local grassroots movements and Indigenous athletes.

Operating alongside dozens of staff volunteers, [Root for Trees](#), the City of Edmonton's tree planting initiative, gifted 1,800 native plant species to attendees while employees from several municipal departments coordinated resources to provide assistance.

Access to Ceremony in Municipal Facilities

Indigenous community members and organizations have been asking for a process to [smudge](#) at events and gatherings. Throughout 2023, we worked to remove barriers to this important ceremony in municipal facilities.

Smudging is now allowed in the following City of Edmonton spaces:

- [City Hall](#)
- [Edmonton Valley Zoo](#)
- [Muttart Conservatory](#)
- [Seniors centres](#)
- [All recreation facilities](#)



Commitment No. 2:

In partnership with organizations, businesses, academic institutions, other orders of government and individual citizens, eliminate the systemic racism and discrimination that Indigenous Peoples face in Edmonton.

The City of Edmonton assumes all operational costs to support smudging in these spaces, including electrical modifications and fire safety equipment. While some facilities allow smudging at any time, others require prior notice to prepare equipment and sensors. Staff at each site can provide additional information.

Vibrant Indigenous Art Installations



pisiskapahtam by Lana Whiskeyjack is on display in Edmonton City Hall.

Commitment No. 3:
Identify and implement ways to make City of Edmonton spaces and buildings welcoming and safe for Indigenous Peoples and ensure they can see themselves reflected in these spaces and places.

While organizing community engagement sessions for the development of the Indigenous Framework, the City of Edmonton invited Indigenous artists MJ Belcourt Moses, Brad Crowfoot, Dawn Marie Marchand and Lana Whiskeyjack to capture the spirit of those conversations through visual media.

In June 2023, the artists joined Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Holders, along with Edmonton City Council and municipal staff, in ceremony to mark the installation and unveiling of these pieces in Edmonton City Hall. The [four Indigenous Framework artworks](#) are on display outside council chambers as a reminder of our commitment to building strong and supportive relationships with Indigenous Peoples, and that all City of Edmonton staff have a role in our truth and reconciliation journey.

Investing in the resurgence of Indigenous art is a direct response to our Indigenous Framework commitments and supports both the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission Municipal Response Plan](#) and [Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives Action Plan](#).

Throughout 2023, we helped share, amplify and honour the work of Indigenous artists including:

- Additional decorative street blades designed by the late Gloria Neapetung of Yellow Quill First Nation for [Okîsikow \(Angel\) Way](#), along with commemorative crosswalk art at 101A Avenue and 97 Street by Nikk Goodswimmer
- A commemorative crosswalk at [ᐃᓄᓄ \(ÎNÎW\) River Lot 11](#) and decorative traffic control boxes near Kinsmen Park and Edmonton City Hall — all designed by artist Lance Cardinal of Bigstone Cree Nation to recognize the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
- The [Dignity Mural](#) located Downtown in the underground pedway system and designed by 15 artists from diverse backgrounds, including lead artist Carla Rae Taylor who has Dene and Irish roots

New Learning Resource for Staff



Commitment No. 4:

Help City of Edmonton staff honour the four framework roles to build relationships with Indigenous Peoples, and increase staff knowledge of Indigenous cultures, traditions and worldviews through education and learning opportunities.

To support the reconciliation journeys of staff, the City of Edmonton created an online learning resource with guidance for building relationships with Indigenous Peoples.

In June 2023, we launched an internal website to support employee engagement with the framework. This site provides historical context on the truth and reconciliation movement, an interactive workbook or “toolkit” to guide individual and group learning activities, advice on delivering land acknowledgments and opportunities to reflect on kinship — the framework’s founding principle.

Over the same year, the team implementing the Indigenous Framework in the Community Recreation and Culture branch hired summer students to deliver workshops based on the toolkit. From May to September, more than 1,200 branch staff participated in the workshops along with others looking to provide similar programming for other departments. We plan to continue organizing these workshops and expand programming.

As a hub for shared knowledge and resources, this website also connects users with the network of Indigenous Framework department action teams creating change throughout the organization, highlights events organized by the Indigenous Framework community of practice, and shares multimedia stories about the City of Edmonton’s efforts to bring the framework to life.

This site operates alongside ongoing and mandatory Indigenous Awareness training course for staff that has been provided since 2014. More than 1,670 City of Edmonton employees completed Indigenous Awareness Training in 2023, bringing the total to over 11,500 since 2014, when the City of Edmonton committed to providing this mandatory program.

Support for Cultural Resurgence



Commitment No. 5:

Host and participate in events where the City of Edmonton — including Edmonton City Council, senior leadership and all levels of the administration — can build relationships with Indigenous Peoples and celebrate our journey together.

The City of Edmonton continues to fund and partner with organizations on events that advance Indigenous sport, recreation and cultures, such as:

- Treaty No. 6 Recognition Day
- Ben Calf Robe Traditional Powwow
- Alberta Indigenous Games
- The Indigenous Experience
- Métis Recognition Week
- Poundmaker's Lodge Annual Competition Powwow
- Native Hockey Alberta Provincial Championships

Alongside community-led events to commemorate the [National Day for Truth and Reconciliation](#), and celebrate [National Indigenous Peoples Day](#), these gatherings brought together more than 30,000 people and provided economic opportunities for Indigenous entrepreneurs, businesses and performers who showcased their products, services and talents.

These partnerships and events also enable staff and the public to participate in commemoration, celebration, community connection and public education.

Miyowatisiwin Camp Inspire



Commitment No. 6:

Identify and remove the systemic barriers that exist for Indigenous Peoples in gaining employment with the City of Edmonton and create career development opportunities for Indigenous employees.

Building on the success of Camp Inspire, a firefighting program to promote the profession as a viable career for equity-deserving groups, [Edmonton Fire Rescue Services](#) partnered with Enoch Cree Nation to launch [Miyowatisiwin Camp Inspire](#), which was designed specifically for Indigenous Peoples.

A Cree word that means “being of good character,” Miyowatisiwin is the name Enoch Cree Nation gifted to the program, which introduces participants to the job in a safe and inclusive way.

Over three days in June 2023, during the kickoff for [National Indigenous History Month](#), 20 participants completed ground training exercises, networked with professionals and built confidence while learning skills they can share with their communities.

Connecting with Community



Commitment No. 7:

Ensure Indigenous Peoples and City of Edmonton staff are informed and engaged, when appropriate, on actions the City of Edmonton takes in relation to the Indigenous Framework.

The contributions of Indigenous partners have been integral to the development, implementation and long-term sustainability of the framework, which includes a commitment to ensure Indigenous community members and staff are informed and engaged on efforts related to this initiative.

In this spirit, the [Indigenous Framework Corporate Action Team](#), composed of staff from each municipal department, hosted check-in sessions with community partners and organizations to present the progress of our efforts and collect feedback. Two half-day check-in sessions in November 2023 saw 44 community partners participate in this process, which involved a prayer and [smudge](#) led by Elders and Knowledge Holders.

The What We Heard report from these sessions is available on the [Indigenous Framework webpage](#) and includes 10 themes identified through feedback:

- Housing and houselessness
- Safety and sensitivity
- Elder protocol
- Resurgence
- Connecting with Indigenous communities
- Ceremonial sites and medicines
- Urban reserves
- Reconciliation
- Youth
- Engaging and retaining Indigenous employees



Iskotew by Amy Malbeuf appears in ᐃᓃᓃ (ÎNÎW) River Lot 11[∞].

INDIGENOUS FRAMEWORK TEAMS



Community members visit an Indigenous Framework booth at the 2024 National Indigenous Peoples Day celebration in Borden Park.

The City of Edmonton supports a network of teams dedicated to implementing the Indigenous Framework throughout the organization and in the greater community.

Led by municipal staff and members of partner organizations, these teams work to build strong relationships with Indigenous employees and community members by embodying the [four roles](#) and working to realize our [framework commitments](#).

Community of Practice

The Indigenous Framework Community of Practice is open to all City of Edmonton employees interested in learning about municipal initiatives involving and supporting Indigenous Peoples.

Guided by a cross-departmental team that plans and organizes events, the community of practice offers staff safe spaces to network, collaborate, seek guidance and share experiences that help to advance the Indigenous Framework.

The community of practice organized learning events in 2023 on several topics including:

- [Urban Reserves Strategy](#) (Jan. 24, 2023)
- [Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives](#) (May 31, 2023)
- [kihcihkaw askî](#) (Nov. 7-8, 2023)

Indigenous Framework Corporate Action Team

The Indigenous Framework Corporate Action Team provides strategic oversight to several [department action teams](#) operating throughout the organization. At least one representative from each department action team sits on the corporate action team, along with members of partner organizations such as the [Edmonton Public Library](#), the [Edmonton Heritage Council](#) and the [Edmonton Arts Council](#).



The Indigenous Framework Corporate Action Team gathers for a sharing circle during a May 2024 retreat at the Rundle Family Centre.

As enthusiastic agents of change, corporate action team members champion the Indigenous Framework and support City of Edmonton efforts to build and maintain relationships with Indigenous Peoples. They also coordinate knowledge and resources that support the efforts of department action teams. This team's strength is rooted in regular connections, conversations and engagements with Indigenous community members and partners, such as:

- [iHuman Youth Society](#) tour (March 1, 2023)
- [Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society](#) tour (April 12, 2023)
- [Ben Calf Robe Traditional Powwow](#) (May 13, 2023)
- [National Indigenous Peoples Day](#) celebration (June 21, 2023)
- [Orange Shirt Day Run and Run](#) (Sept. 30, 2023)
- [Indigenous Framework Community Check-ins](#) (Nov. 3 and 24, 2023)

Department Action Teams

In each City of Edmonton department, staff teams create and implement action plans to realize our [Indigenous Framework commitments](#).

Department action teams work at the grassroots level to effect change throughout the organization while building relationships with Indigenous employees and community members. Team members also guide the reconciliation journeys of colleagues by modeling the [four roles](#) of listener, connector, partner and advocate.

Altogether, these teams have more than 70 projects outlined in their action plans. Each department action team has a story to share about their efforts to build strong and supportive relationships with Indigenous community members in 2023.



Community Services staff and an Indigenous artist designed a 2023 winter count.

Mind for Planning: A Reconciliation Discussion Group

Urban Planning and Economy



A selection from a mural at River Cree Resort and Casino maps numbered treaty territories.

The [Urban Planning and Economy](#) department developed programming to support staff in their reconciliation journeys. Over six weeks in 2023, about 40 employees participated in Mind for Planning: A Reconciliation Discussion Group, which involved in-depth conversations on the importance of treaties, specifically Treaty No. 6.

The program culminated with a learning event at [PĪYĒSĪW WĀSKĀHIKAN](#) (Thunderbird House), a dedicated Indigenous space in Edmonton Public Library's Stanley A. Milner branch. Led by Nôhkom Jo-Ann Saddleback, this session focused on treaty history in nêhiyaw (Cree) culture and our collective treaty responsibilities. Many staff participants shared that they had not read [Treaty No. 6](#) in full, but gained a greater understanding of the history of Treaty 6 territory through this experience.

This series offered Urban Planning and Economy staff opportunities to enact Indigenous Framework roles, support the development of kinship with Indigenous community members and improve their relationships with the land.

Winter Count Project

Community Services

To chart their reconciliation journey, staff in the [Community Services](#) department embraced a reporting process that promotes the resurgence of Indigenous cultures. Members of the [Safe and Healthy Communities Team](#), which helps address complex social conditions affecting Edmontonians, created a winter count charting their Indigenous Framework implementation efforts throughout 2023.

A traditional practice among Blackfoot and other nations, winter counts record historical events, often on a buffalo hide illustrated with pictorial symbols. Through this project, 49 team members created symbols representing their efforts to realize the four roles and seven commitments of the Indigenous Framework. We also worked with local Indigenous artist Chloe Bluebird Mustooch, who created a digital buffalo robe to carry the team's symbols.

Honouring Land, Stories and Teachings

Integrated Infrastructure Services

In the summer of 2023, the [Integrated Infrastructure Services](#) department was involved in an excavation project in the Rosssdale area. For thousands of years, this part of the river valley has served as a meeting place for Indigenous Peoples engaging in trade, migration and ceremony.

Recognizing the cultural and historical significance of this land, members of the project team sought to meaningfully involve the First Nations and Métis communities connected to the area. Indigenous communities engaged with the team to lead a pre-ground disturbance ceremony before monitoring the excavation to document any historically significant items uncovered in the process.

Guided by the Indigenous Framework, the project team gained a deeper understanding of the historical, cultural, ecological and archaeological significance of the land by listening to Indigenous community members with open hearts and minds. Team members also helped ensure any uncovered artefacts were handled using appropriate protocols in partnership with Indigenous Peoples participating as project monitors.



The North Saskatchewan River wraps around the Rosssdale community.

Connecting Communities with Data

Financial and Corporate Services

When communities north of Alberta were evacuated during the 2023 wildfire season, many fled to the Edmonton area for safety. Dene National Chief Gerald Antoine was among those to find refuge in the area.

At the time, the City of Edmonton had established an emergency reception centre to support evacuees. Recognizing that some Dene community members found shelter outside the Edmonton Emergency Reception Centre, including those staying at the River Cree Resort and Casino, municipal staff worked with Chief Antoine to ensure these evacuees had access to similar resources, such as passes for transit and recreation facilities. And when the Dene Nation sought data on its community members who landed in Edmonton, an employee in the [Financial and Corporate Services](#) department saw an opportunity to help.

Recalling a land acknowledgment in which a City of Edmonton manager mentioned the [First Nations Information Governance Centre](#), which ensures data is collected ethically and First Nations communities are empowered to use their data for their needs, the employee found a way to safely share relevant data with the Dene Nation while maintaining ethical data governance practices and observing Alberta's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.



Preparing to Cross the Sacred River by Marianne Nicolson in ᐃᓄᓄ (ÎNÎW) River Lot 11∞.

Respecting Traditional Knowledge

Employee and Legal Services Division (Office of the City Manager)



By leading ceremonies, prayers and intergenerational teachings, Elders and Knowledge Holders anchor us to Indigenous ways of knowing and being that model good kinship relationships.

Honouring our commitment to provide Indigenous awareness training to all City of Edmonton staff, the [Employee and Legal Services division in the Office of the City Manager](#) engaged an Indigenous-owned organization to create an educational video series based on interviews with Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Holders. These videos will cover several topics such as protocol, treaties, and working as well as building relationships with Indigenous Peoples.

During production, participating Elders and Knowledge Holders expressed concern at the thought of signing release forms that referenced their contributions, including traditional knowledge, as property. The Employee and Legal Services division respected these concerns and drafted an alternative release form recognizing these teachings as shared, but not owned, by the City of Edmonton.

As a living initiative, the Indigenous Framework is designed to adapt to changing priorities as our relationships with Indigenous Peoples grow and mature. In the same spirit, we are demonstrating that municipal systems can be changed and adapted to emerging concerns and considerations from community members.

Protecting Cultural Plants

City Operations



Elder Evelyn Day participates in the Connect with Our Roots event at Tawa Park in June 2023 to celebrate National Indigenous History Month.

While preparing for the September 2023 opening of [Northeast River Valley Park](#), crews with the [City Operations](#) department were removing invasive weeds from the area in the interests of public safety and environmental preservation.

During this process, an Indigenous employee noticed plants important to Indigenous cultures were growing in the same area and informed the team's supervisor and manager.

As listeners and partners, crew members heard the concerns of a colleague and collaborated to find a respectful solution. The flora was safely transplanted to a protected City of Edmonton horticulture bed where it could flourish.

NEXT STEPS: CALLS TO ACTION & CALLS FOR JUSTICE



The Bentwood Box travelled with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to national events across Canada.

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) outlined 94 calls to action to redress the painful legacy of residential schools and advance the reconciliation process with Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Around this time, the City of Edmonton began exploring ways to renew our relationships with Indigenous Peoples — a process that culminated with the 2021 launch of the Indigenous Framework.

As the foundation for our reconciliation journey, the Indigenous Framework guides all of our efforts to build strong and supportive relationships with Indigenous Peoples. This initiative has supported the ongoing development and implementation of plans that respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 calls to action and the 231 calls for justice outlined in the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

TRC Municipal Response Plan

Initially, implementation of the [TRC Municipal Response Plan](#) involved identifying projects that align with the calls to action and developing plans to enhance our response. In essence and over time, this plan aims to address all 94 calls to action in one form or another — from answering the calls for municipalities to advocating those directed at other sectors and orders of government. Advocacy is one of four thematic pillars — along with awareness, addressing and resurgence — that were created in consultation with community members to organize our response.

As of July 2023, the TRC Municipal response plan has grown to include 91 commitments that respond to, or were inspired by, 39 calls to action. Of these commitments, 72 involve projects underway. Eight commitments have been met, although some involve ongoing work. Four commitments have projects in the early planning stages, while work on seven have yet to begin.

This report includes highlights that correspond to each of the four pillars. Visit the Truth and Reconciliation Dashboard available at edmonton.ca/TRC for a more comprehensive view.



Edmonton hosted the seventh Truth and Reconciliation Commission national event in March 2014.

Increasing Awareness



Artist Nikk Goodswimmer designed commemorative crosswalk art for Okisikow (Angel) Way Day in June 2023.

The awareness pillar focuses on efforts to enhance understanding of the effects of residential schools and colonization on Indigenous communities. Guided by the Indigenous Framework and TRC Municipal Response Plan, staff and leadership have participated in ceremonies, gatherings with community partners and conversations with Elders and Knowledge Holders. Some of these efforts overlap with projects connected to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives Action Plan.

The City of Edmonton rededicated **Okisikow (Angel) Way** in June 2023 with a ceremony, along with additional decorative street blades and crosswalk art from Indigenous artists, to raise awareness and show support for victims of gender-based violence. The Cree name for this stretch of 101A Avenue between 96 Street and 97 Street honours local Indigenous cultures and brings attention to the high rates of violence against Indigenous Peoples in Canada. In June 2024, the roadway was officially renamed Okisikow Way NW.

The street blades were designed by the late Gloria Neapetung, a social activist, street survivor and member of Yellow Quill First Nation. Edmonton artist Nikk Goodswimmer created the crosswalk design with medicine wheel colours hoping it “heals the streets” and inspires people “to end the cycle of violence as well as the stigma around it.”

Okisikow (Angel) Way received its honorary name in 2011 in response to a national campaign challenging Canadian cities to follow the lead of Iqaluit, Nvt., which named the road outside a women’s shelter Angel Street to raise awareness and support for victims of domestic violence.



A signpost on 97 Street and Okisikow (Angel) Way features Gloria Neapetung’s art.

Addressing Priorities



Community members craft miniature ribbon skirt magnets during a July 2024 engagement session with Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Holders on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Municipal Response Plan.

The addressing pillar drives action in communities and changes to municipal systems, policies and procedures that support positive outcomes and lived experiences for Indigenous Peoples. Moving from listening and learning to action is an ongoing process that requires thoughtful implementation of projects and initiatives that address the priorities of Indigenous community members.

In September 2023, the City of Edmonton launched an [operating grant](#) with \$500,000 in funding to support Indigenous-led, non-profit organizations that:

- Promote the resurgence of Indigenous Peoples' cultures, languages, identities and ceremonies
- Ensure safe, inclusive and healing spaces
- Increase awareness and address responses to historical colonialism, trauma and violence
- Provide education, training, employment and economic security for Indigenous Peoples

The following October, Edmonton City Council unanimously voted to add another \$500,000 in funding for this program — for a total of \$1 million — on an ongoing basis.

For the 2023-24 funding term, 20 organizations are receiving support through this grant, including Edmonton 2 Spirit Society, Métis Capital Housing Corporation, Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women and Indigenous Sport Council of Alberta. The next round of applications is expected to open in the fall of 2024.

The City of Edmonton also created the [Festival and Events Micro Grant](#) to support smaller, outdoor efforts to highlight local Indigenous artists, performers, histories and cultures. This grant prioritizes cultural, multicultural and Indigenous-led events. In 2023, more than \$233,000 was awarded to 70 organizations including Edmonton Aboriginal Seniors Centre, Edmonton Native Ball Association and IndigiHauz of Beaver Hills.

Supporting Resurgence

The resurgence pillar promotes efforts to support the revitalization of Indigenous cultures, languages, knowledge and autonomy through community partnerships and funding. Systemic changes that enable resurgence are integral to reconciliation, but they will take time as we work to create safe and inclusive space for Indigenous cultures to thrive in Edmonton.

Following several years of engagement, planning and design, the City of Edmonton partnered with the [Indigenous Knowledge and Wisdom Centre](#) in September 2023 to open [kihcihkaw askî](#), a name that means sacred land in Cree. Located near Whitemud Park, kihcihkaw askî is an urban Indigenous ceremony site that offers a natural setting for sweat lodges, cultural camps and more — all while supporting intergenerational and land-based learning. The project involved naturalizing the land and building infrastructure to support programming and cultural activities led by the Indigenous Knowledge and Wisdom Centre, which manages and operates the site. A circular area on site accommodates up to eight sweat lodges along with two permanent fire enclosures to heat the stones for ceremonies. The site also includes space for teepees and a permanent feast fire pit for ceremonies and group workshops.

Over two days in November 2023, the Indigenous Framework Community of Practice partnered with the Indigenous Knowledge and Wisdom Centre to host a seminar and nature walk for dozens of City of Edmonton employees. Participants learned about the site and the importance of ceremony. The location for this site also holds historical and cultural significance as a ceremonial and gathering place in the past. Indigenous Peoples harvested medicines in the area long before it became farmland. The site is also located near a deposit of ochre, a rare mineral used in spiritual and traditional ceremonies.



kihcihkaw askî (Sacred Land) fire pits can heat stones for sweat lodge ceremonies.

Advocating with Partners

While many calls to action are outside municipal jurisdiction, the City of Edmonton can serve as an advocate, working with partners to effect change by identifying and supporting shared priorities. Throughout 2023, efforts to advance reconciliation and anti-racism initiatives were at the forefront of conversations with First Nations, Métis organizations, Indigenous community partners and other orders of government.

Recognizing an urgent need for appropriate affordable [housing solutions for Indigenous Peoples](#) in Edmonton, we partnered with the [Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations](#) in August 2023 to pen a [letter of intent](#) that commits both organisations to advocate Indigenous-led and culturally appropriate affordable housing. Both parties signed the letter in May 2024.

The [2023 Edmonton Affordable Housing Needs Assessment](#) found that 4,825 (27 per cent) of 18,040 Indigenous renter households in 2021 were in core housing need — a figure projected to increase to 5,900 in 2031. Core Housing Need is defined by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation as housing that falls below at least one of the adequacy, affordability or suitability standards. This letter of intent with the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations signifies the next step of a longstanding partnership that dates back to 2012, when we signed a [memorandum of cooperation and dialogue](#) that was renewed in 2021.



Métis Capital Housing Corporation received a 2024 Indigenous-led affordable housing grant.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives Action Plan

Answering Call to Action No. 41 from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission final report, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls identified 231 calls for justice to ensure Indigenous women, girls, two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual (2SLGBTQIA) people live in dignity.

In response, the City of Edmonton launched the [Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives \(MMIR\) Action Plan](#) to address the calls for justice. This initiative is also organized by four thematic pillars — awareness, addressing, resurgence and advocacy — created in collaboration with local community members working to end violence against Indigenous Peoples.

Progress on the MMIR Action Plan over the past year was presented to the Community and Public Services Committee in December 2023. The plan now includes 26 commitments involving multiple projects that together connect to 50 calls for justice. More information on this report is available at the edmonton.ca/MMIR webpage.



Red dresses in Beaver Hills House Park honour missing and murdered Indigenous relatives.



Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society hosted one of the Indigenous Framework Community check-in sessions in November 2023.

THE ROAD AHEAD: PLANS FOR 2024

Collaborative efforts to implement the Indigenous Framework in 2024 are well underway as we continue building strong and supportive relationships with Indigenous Peoples.

The 2021 launch of the Indigenous Framework set the stage for developments such as the [Indigenous Housing Strategy](#), [Indigenous Procurement Framework](#), [TRC Municipal Response Plan](#), [MMIR Action Plan](#) and [Anti-Racism Strategy](#). Guided by the [four roles](#), City of Edmonton staff and leaders continue seeking new opportunities to work with community members and advance our reconciliation journey through the [seven framework commitments](#).

This work is grounded in the spirit of kinship and involves participating in ceremonies, attending community gatherings and listening to the lived experiences of Indigenous Peoples in and around the city.

Indigenous Framework

As the City of Edmonton embraces a fourth year guided by the Indigenous Framework, Edmontonians can expect to see this initiative shaping more municipal processes, programs and services to better address the priorities of Indigenous community members.

Department action teams are in the process of advancing more than 70 projects inspired by our framework commitments. Their upcoming department action plans will be informed by feedback from the [November 2023 Indigenous Framework community check-in sessions](#), along with a concerted effort to integrate this work with our TRC Municipal Response Plan.

We are also in the midst of developing an Indigenous evaluation framework to better understand the effects of these efforts. This lens for culturally appropriate assessment will incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing and being and prioritize Indigenous community voices..

TRC Municipal Response Plan



Call to Action No. 82 calls for a residential schools monument in each capital city to honour survivors and the children who were lost to their families and communities.

Marking the 10-year anniversary of the TRC Alberta National Event in Edmonton, the City of Edmonton launched a virtual dashboard in March 2024 to chart and share the progress of our reconciliation journey. Scheduled for quarterly updates, the [Truth and Reconciliation Dashboard](#) currently details more than 90 TRC Municipal Response Plan commitments in our effort to address as many of the 94 calls to action as possible.

As with the Indigenous Framework, the TRC Municipal Response plan is a living document designed to adapt to the priorities of Indigenous Peoples in Edmonton. We are in the process of engaging Indigenous community members, including Elders and Knowledge Holders, for guidance and feedback on several projects connected to this plan, including:

- **Space for ceremonial fires** — we are in the process of identifying and creating a space to support ceremonial fires for Indigenous cultural practices.
- **Renaming Government Centre LRT Station** — after Edmonton City Council [unanimously voted](#) in 2021 to remove the previous name and related mural, both of which evoked painful memories connected to Canada's residential school system, we are convening a community circle to guide the process of renaming and commissioning new art for this space.
- **Residential schools memorial** — the City of Edmonton is collaborating with partners to identify opportunities for honouring the lives lost to, and affected by, residential schools, particularly in connection with the former Edmonton and Youville residential school sites outside city boundaries.

MMIR Action Plan

In addition to providing continued support for community-led initiatives promoting cultural resurgence, such as [National Indigenous History Month](#) events and [Walk a Mile in a Ribbon Skirt](#), the MMIR Action plan includes a commitment to developing an internship for Indigenous women and two-spirit people.

The 2024 Indigenous Project and Engagement Internship program, developed in partnership with Ociciwan Contemporary Art Centre and tapanâyimôkamik (the Humble Lodge), places interns with the City of Edmonton's Indigenous Relations Office and partner organizations for work experience supporting community engagement and cultural projects.

Partnerships enabled through the MMIR Action Plan include a collaboration with Indigenous media to raise public awareness of missing and murdered Indigenous relatives. Throughout 2024, the City of Edmonton will be working with these partners to develop and share an education and awareness campaign that includes the voices of survivors, activists, and advocates involved in local efforts to end violence against Indigenous Peoples.



A May 2024 round dance in Downtown Edmonton recognizes Red Dress Day.

CONCLUSION

The past year demonstrates that with continued support from Edmonton City Council, the Executive Leadership Team, City of Edmonton staff and partner organizations, the Indigenous Framework is creating a foundation for meaningful change within the organization and throughout the community.

The framework empowers us to build strong and supportive relationships with Indigenous Peoples as listeners, partners, connectors and advocates. Maintaining these relationships provides a deeper understanding of Indigenous Peoples' lived experiences, identities and distinct cultures — all of which reinforce our efforts to improve programs and services for Indigenous community members. Reconciliation is not a linear journey, which is why the Indigenous Framework, TRC Municipal Response Plan and MMIR Action Plan are living initiatives designed to adapt to changing community priorities as these relationships mature.

This work is done alongside and in solidarity with Indigenous communities in the spirit of kinship, which involves holding space for Indigenous Peoples' truths and voices to support healing, reclamation and resurgence. Together, we're building a vibrant, inclusive and welcoming place that honours the First Peoples of this land.



Borden Park visitors celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day in June 2024.